

CIRM Allocates \$30 million to Seize Stem Cell Research Opportunities, Accelerate the Pace of New Cures

Posted: June 23, 2011

San Diego, Calif., June 23, 2011 -The Governing Board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, the state stem cell agency created by proposition 71, today approved the concept for a \$30 million initiative that is intended to make the agency more nimble in seizing emerging opportunities in the rapidly evolving field.

The new Opportunity Fund has three components:

- The Bridge Fund Program will provide additional funding for selected CIRM projects. These funds would provide uninterrupted funding of promising science until the next relevant Request for Applications is offered, with the maximum supplement of \$5 million;
- The External Innovation Funding Program would provide a fellowship for scientists based outside California to spend time in California working with CIRM-funded investigators offering complementary expertise and/or a promising environment for carrying out that research. The program would provide 12 month supplemental funding of up to \$500,000 to an existing CIRM-funded research award to support the high impact research opportunity;
- The Strategic Partnership Program will foster funding from industry, venture capital and others to support CIRM-funded programs. The support will be provided using a streamlined process involving a Program Announcement with rolling submissions and Grants Working Group reviews approximately two times a year. Qualifying projects would have a California-based lead scientist partnered with a non-profit, a biotech company or a biopharmaceutical company that will commit to in-kind support. Projects could also be composed of a California-based lead scientist who is funded primarily by venture capital, or who has significant funding through foundation support or other sources.

The Opportunity Fund also includes some funds to aid with technology transfer. Only this piece of the program will commence now. The other components of the program will be deliberated further by the Science Subcommittee and the full board.

"The flexibility this new initiative gives the agency will go a long way toward fulfilling several key recommendations of the External Review Panel in its report to our Board last December," said Alan Trounson, President of CIRM. "With these new options the agency should be able to accelerate the field as a whole towards the clinic by seizing on opportunities to collaborate and advance some of the most promising projects in the field, and to do that while creating opportunities for the California research community."

The recommendations of the External Review Panel along with biographies of panel members can be found here:
http://www.cirm.ca.gov/files/PDFs/Administrative/CIRM-EAP_Report.pdf

The board chose to continue the highly successful 17 Training and 16 Bridges to Stem Cell Research programs for an additional three years each rather than issuing new requests for applications. The existing programs will be required to pass an in-depth review by CIRM staff before receiving extensions worth a total of \$46 million for Training Awards and \$26 million for Bridges to Stem Cell Research Awards.

"These Fellowship Training programs have produced more published papers than any other award program and one drug now in phase II clinical trials came out of work by a trainee," said Governing Board chair Robert Klein. "Both programs are creating intellectual capital in California by training technicians, scientists and physician scientists who will continue to grow California's stem cell programs and develop the stem cell therapies of tomorrow."

The governing board also voted to accept a set of recommendations from its Legislative subcommittee regarding four pieces of legislation:

- To support the state legislation Assembly Bill 190 that would add \$3 to the fine for all traffic violations and direct that money to the Roman Reed Spinal Cord Injury Fund to be used for research in the field;
- To support federal legislation, house bill 1862, The Regenerative Medicine Promotion Act of 2011, that would require a report identifying all federal regenerative medicine programs, establish within the Department of Health and Human Services an

interagency Regenerative Medicine Coordinating Council that would prepare a national strategy for the field with specific priorities, and would authorize HHS to provide grants in the field (but no new funds are requested);

- To delegate the chair and vice chair of the legislative subcommittee to write a letter opposing portions of federal legislation in Senate Bill 23 and House Bill 1249 if the bill would block patenting the development of human organs.

The Board also passed a resolution honoring outgoing Chair Klein for his years of service to the Board and to stem cell science. The resolution applauded Klein's long commitment and service to passing Proposition 71 and driving the CIRM's mission. It concluded, "Governing Board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine hereby bestows upon Robert N. Klein the title of Chairman Emeritus of the Governing Board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine in recognition of his outstanding contributions and dedication to CIRM and its mission."

Finally, Klein thanked Margaret Ferguson, CIRM's Finance Officer who is retiring in August, for her long service to California State. "Margaret has been a fundamental pillar of this organization," Klein said. "We are privileged that the last and best years of her 42 years of state service were with us."

About CIRM: CIRM was established in November 2004 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. A list of grants and loans awarded to date may be seen here: <http://www.cirm.ca.gov/for-researchers/researchfunding>

Source URL: <http://www.cirm.ca.gov/about-cirm/newsroom/press-releases/06232011/cirm-allocates-30-million-seize-stem-cell-research>